

IN THE U.S. PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

Appellant: Caitlyn Curtin
Application No.: 10/733,414
Art Unit: 3743
Filed: December 12, 2003
Examiner: Stephen Michael Gravini
For: HANDS-FREE HAIR AND BODY DRYER
Attorney Docket No.: 3681-000001

APPELLANT'S BRIEF ON APPEAL

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APPELLANT' BRIEF ON APPEAL

I. REAL PARTY IN INTEREST:

The real party in interest in this appeal is Caitlyn Curtin.

II. RELATED APPEALS AND INTERFERENCES:

There are no known appeals or interferences that will affect, be directly affected by, or have a bearing on the Board's decision in this Appeal.

III. STATUS OF CLAIMS:

Claims 1-14 are pending in the application, with claim 1 being written in independent form.

Claims 1-14 remain finally rejected under 35 U.S.C. §112, first paragraph. Claims 1-3, 5, 6, 8, 13 and 14 remain finally rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) based on U.S. Patent No. 5,822,878 to Jones ("Jones"). Claim 4 was finally rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103 based on the combination of Jones and U.S. Patent No. 6,038,786 to Aisenberg ("Aisenberg"). Claims 7, 9 and 10 were finally rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103 based on Jones. Claim 11 was finally rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103 based on the combination of Jones and U.S. Patent No. 5,970,622 to Bahman ("Bahman"). Claim 12 was finally rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103 based on the combination of Jones and U.S. Patent No. 5,857,263 to Chan ("Chan").

Claims 1-14 are being appealed.

IV. STATUS OF AMENDMENTS:

A Response to a non-Final Office Action was filed on June 8, 2009. Subsequently, a Final Office Action was mailed August 19, 2009 with no claims being allowed. This appeal immediately followed.

V. SUMMARY OF CLAIMED SUBJECT MATTER:

(i). Overview of the Subject Matter of the Independent Claims

The present invention is directed at a hands-free hair and body dryer that allows a person to use the dryer over a wide range of motion, yet still manages to dry the hair or body. Independent claim 1 reads as follows (specification references are in parenthesis)

- 1. A dryer comprising:**
a diffuser for allowing air to exit in order to dry a surface of a user's body (paragraphs [0011] to [0014] and Figure 1);
movement means for moving the diffuser over a wide range of angles in order to dry different parts of the surface (paragraphs [0011] to [0014]; and
control means for sending instructions to the movement means in order to control the movement of the movement means over the wide range of angles (paragraphs [0018] to [0020], [0025]) and Figure 1).

Dependent claim 2 reads as follows:

- 2. The dryer as in claim 1 further comprising securing means for securing the dryer to an object for support** (paragraph [0016] and Figure 1).

Dependent claim 8 reads a follows:

- 8. The dryer as in claim 1 further comprising muffler means for reducing noise made by the dryer** (paragraphs [0023], [0024] and Figure 2).

In order to make the overview set forth above concise the disclosure that has been included, or referred to, above only represents a portion of the total disclosure set forth in the Specification that supports the independent claims.

(ii). The Remainder of the Specification Also Supports the Claims

The Appellant notes that there may be additional disclosure in the Specification that also supports the independent and dependent claims.

Further, by including the specification citations in parenthesis above the Appellant does not represent that this is the only evidence that supports the independent claims nor does Appellant necessarily represent that these citations alone can be used to fully interpret the claims of the present invention. Instead, the citations provide background support as an overview of the claimed subject matter.

VI. GROUND OF REJECTION TO BE REVIEWED ON APPEAL:

Appellant seeks the Board's review and reversal of: (a) the rejection of claims 1-14 based on 35 U.S.C. §112, first paragraph; (b) the rejection of claims 1-3, 5, 6, 8, 13 and 14 under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) based on Jones; (c) the rejection of claim 4 under 35 U.S.C. §103 based on the combination of Jones and Aisenberg; (d) the rejection of claims 7, 9 and 10 under 35 U.S.C. §103 based on Jones; (e) the rejection of claim 11 under 35 U.S.C. §103 based on the combination of Jones and Bahman; and (f) the rejection of claim 12 under 35 U.S.C. §103 based on the combination of Jones and Chan.

VII. ARGUMENTS:

A. The Section 112, first paragraph rejections

Claims 1-14 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §112, first paragraph, the Examiner taking the position that the phrases "movement means" (claim 1), "control means" (claim 1), "securing means" (claim 2) and "muffling means" (claim 8) are not described in the specification in sufficient detail to allow one of ordinary skill in the art to conclude that the inventor had possession of the claimed subject matter at the time the instant application was filed. Appellant disagrees.

To begin with, so-called "means" clauses, such as those in claims 1, 2 and 8, are interpreted based on the corresponding structure, material or acts disclosed in the specification and drawings and any equivalents thereof, 35

U.S.C. §112, sixth paragraph. Further, though Examiners may interpret the phrases in a claim broadly, any interpretation must be reasonable and consistent with the specification, *In re Hyatt* 211 F.3d 1367, 1372 (Fed. Cir. 2000).

(i) The “Means” Clauses Are Clearly Supported By Specific Structure In The Text And Drawings Of The Specification

Appellant respectfully submits that the specification contains a description of structure in its text and drawings that are clearly linked to each of the “means” clauses listed above, as described below.

(a) “movement means”

The claimed “movement means” is described as consisting of first movement means 2 and second movement means 3 in FIG. 1 (see page 2) which is described as depicting “a hair and body dryer 1”. The specification goes on to more specifically describe the operation of the first and second movement means 2, 3 as used as a part of the hair and body dryer 1 (see Specification paragraphs [0011] through [0014]). FIG. 1 also clearly shows the means 2, 3 as a part of the hair and body dryer 1. Specific structural examples of the first and second movement means 2, 3 are described in the text and figures of the specification.

For example, the first movement means is described as comprising a “pivoting mechanism 2a or the like to move the dryer 1 to a desired position”. This pivoting mechanism 2a is not linked to any other structure in the specification except the first movement means.

As used in the Specification the phrase, “or the like”, means --or its equivalent--. That is, rather than set forth all of the possible, structural equivalents of a pivoting mechanism (a practical impossibility) that are capable of moving the hair and body dryer 1 shown in FIG. 1 to a desired position, the Appellant simply wanted to provide notice to the reader that the specific pivoting mechanism 2a described in the specification and shown in FIG. 1 was

but one example of such a mechanism that could be used to move the dryer 1 to a desired position.

The specification also describes, in the text and figures, a specific example of a second movement means. For example, the second movement means 3 “may also comprise a pivoting mechanism 3a to further allow the dryer 1 and diffuser 5 to be positioned over different parts of the surface of the head and body”. The pivoting mechanism 3a is not linked to any other structure in the specification except the second movement means.

Rather than making the specification's description of the claimed movement means indefinite as the Examiner alleges, the disclosure set forth above demonstrates that the specification's description of the movement means is specific and definite; e.g., any means that is the equivalent of mechanism 3a must be able to position the hair and body dryer 1 over different parts of the surface of a head and body.

In rebuttal the Examiner takes the position that the phrase “pivoting mechanism” is itself functional language. Appellant disagrees.

Though the Federal Circuit has interpreted the word “mechanism” when used alone in a claim as functional language (see for example, *Welker Bearing Company v. PHD, Incorporated*, Appeal No. 2008-1169 (December 15, 2008)) such is not the case here.

Instead, the specification describes one example of the movement means as being a “pivoting mechanism”. Thus, rather than describe the movement means as some generalized “mechanism” the specification specifies that one example of the movement means is a pivoting mechanism.

(b) “control means”

The control means is shown in FIGs 1 and 2 and described in paragraphs [0018] through [0020] and [0025] as element “6”.

In the specification the control means 6 is described as “a removable or built-in remote control for controlling the power on/off functions of the dryer 1,

and/or controlling the initiation, cessation and positioning of the movement means 2, 2a and 3, 3a.” In more detail, the control means 6 is described as comprising “circuitry or the like which is programmed (or programmable) to send instructions to both movement means 2, 2a, 3, 3a that result in an associated movement of lower body 2b of the dryer 1 or upper body 3b of the dryer 1 through a wide range of angles. Each movement of lower or upper body 2b, 3b results in a new position of diffuser 5 over a person's head or body.”

In addition, the control means 6 is described as comprising “an infrared or radio frequency transceiver for detecting the presence or absence of a user, i.e., whether a user remains close enough to the dryer 1 so that the dryer 1 remains on. For example, if a person walks a far enough distance away from the dryer 1, the control means 6 may detect such movement and send a signal to the power source of the dryer 1 in order to shut the dryer off.”

Yet further, the control means 6 is described as comprising “a timer which, regardless of the movement of a user, will track the amount of time the dryer 1 has been operating and automatically shut the dryer off if it exceeds a certain threshold (e.g., 15 minutes).”

Finally, the control means 6 is described as containing “sensors and appropriate circuitry to measure the internal temperature of the dryer 1 including the muffler 9 in order to determine whether to disconnect the dryer 1 from its power supply 7 in order to meet United Laboratories specifications or the like and to prevent the dryer 10 from malfunctioning or catching fire.”

As before the phrase, “or the like”, means --or its equivalent--. That is, rather than set forth all of the possible equivalents of a control mechanism that are capable of--- (i) sending instructions to both movement means 2, 2a, 3, 3a that result in an associated movement of lower body 2b of the dryer 1 or upper body 3b of the dryer 1 through a wide range of angles; (ii) detecting the presence or absence of a user; (iii) tracking the amount of time the dryer 1 has been operating and automatically shutting the dryer off if it exceeds a certain

threshold; and (iv) measuring the internal temperature of the dryer 1 including the muffler 9 in order to determine whether to disconnect the dryer 1 from its power supply 7 and to prevent the dryer 10 from malfunctioning or catching fire---a practical impossibility---the Appellant simply wanted to provide notice to the reader that the specific control mechanism 6 described in the specification and shown in FIGs. 1 and 2 was but one example of such a mechanism that could be used to implement functions (i) through (iv).

Again, rather than making the specification's description of the claimed control means indefinite, the disclosure set forth above demonstrates that the specification's description of the control means is specific and definite: any means that is the equivalent of mechanism 6 must be able to send instructions to movement means that result in an associated movement of a dryer through a wide range of angles over the surface of a person's head and body, detect the presence or absence of a person, track the amount of time a dryer has been operating and automatically shutting the dryer off if it exceeds a certain threshold, and measure an internal temperature of a dryer in order to determine whether to disconnect the dryer from its power supply to prevent the dryer from malfunctioning or catching fire.

In rebuttal the Examiner takes the position that the "sensors or circuitry are construed to be a communication means". Further, the Examiner takes the position that the phrase "or the like" in the specification "is not descriptive of any structure".

Initially, the Appellant notes that she is not taking the position that the use of the phrase "or the like" in the specification describes the claimed phrase "control means". Thus, the Examiner's second position appears to be moot.

As for the Examiner's first position, the Appellant notes that the claims do not contain the phrases "sensors or circuitry" so it is respectfully submitted that their interpretation is irrelevant to the issues at hand.

What is relevant is whether or not the specification sets forth sufficient structure describing the claimed “control means” in order to allow one skilled in the art to conclude that the inventor had possession of the invention at the time the application was filed. Appellant respectfully submits that, indeed, the specification does so.

(c) “securing means”

The securing means 4 is shown in FIGs. 1 and 2 and is described in the specification in paragraphs [0016] as “removable securing means 4 for securing the dryer 1 to another object, such as a chair, pole, etc., for support.” More specifically, the specification states that the securing means 4 “may comprise a heavy-duty plastic clip, or a combination of a receptacle and main pole which allows the dryer 1 to move up and down in a vertical motion in order to raise the height of the dryer 1, to name just a few examples.”

The phrase, “may comprise” means the corresponding structure and functions described in the specification are not meant to be the only examples of the securing means. That is, the described corresponding structure and functions are meant to be exemplary. Rather than set forth all of the possible equivalents of a securing mechanism that are capable of securing a dryer to another object for support and allowing a dryer to move up and down in a vertical motion in order to raise the height of the dryer---a practical impossibility---the Appellant simply wanted to provide notice to the reader that the specific securing mechanism 4 described in the specification and shown in FIGs. 1 and 2 were just examples of such a mechanism.

Rather than making the specification's description of the claimed securing means indefinite, the disclosure set forth above demonstrates that the specification's description of the securing means is specific and definite; i.e., any means that is the equivalent of mechanism 4 must be able to secure a dryer to another object for support and allow a dryer to move up and down in a

vertical motion in order to raise the height of the dryer over different parts of the surface of a person's head and body.

In rebuttal the Examiner appears to simply paraphrase the requirements of 35 U.S.C. § 112, first paragraph (see page 3 of the Final Office Action). Clearly, this is insufficient.

(d) “muffler means”

The muffler or muffling means 9 is shown in FIG 2 and is described in the specification in paragraphs [0023] and [0024]. As described the muffler or muffling means 9 “may comprise a baffling structure 12 made of a heat tolerant or heat resistant material capable of withstanding the temperatures of the air which exits from the air diffuser 5. This muffler means 9 is capable of being detached completely or switched into and out of the path of the air exiting the diffuser 5 by means of optional hinging means 11 or the like. The purpose of the baffling structure 12 is to reduce the noise which results from the air leaving the air diffuser 5 or from the motor (not shown in FIG. 2) used to operate the dryer 10. Such noise may interfere with the ability of a user to hear a phone or doorbell ring.”

In another embodiment the muffler or muffling means 9 “may be made of a heat sensitive material which is capable of changing color depending on the temperature of the material. For example, the material may change from a darker color to a lighter color when the temperature of the material reaches a certain threshold. This color change may act as a warning to a user of the dryer 10 that the temperature of the muffler 9 is reaching a dangerous level and should be removed.”

As explained above, the phrase, “may comprise” means the corresponding structure and functions described in the specification are not meant to be the only examples of the muffler or muffling means. That is, the described corresponding structure and functions are meant to be exemplary. Rather than set forth all of the possible equivalents of a muffling mechanism

that are capable of reducing noise which results from air leaving an air diffuser or from a motor used to operate a dryer and changing color depending on temperature as a warning to a user that the temperature of the muffler is reaching a dangerous level and should be removed ---a practical impossibility-- the Appellant simply wanted to provide notice to the reader that the specific muffler or muffling mechanism 9 described in the specification and shown in FIG 2 was just an example of such a mechanism.

Rather than making the specification's description of the claimed muffler/muffling means indefinite, the disclosure set forth above demonstrates that the specification's description of the muffler/muffling means is specific and definite; i.e., any means that is the equivalent of mechanism 9 must be able to reduce the noise which results from air leaving an air diffuser or from a motor used to operate a dryer and change color depending on temperature as a warning to a user that the temperature of the muffler is reaching a dangerous level.

In rebuttal the Examiner takes the position that "baffling" is a functional term construed to mean a flow obstruction and not necessarily any structure, material or acts".

To begin with, the word "baffling" is not being construed. Instead, the phrase "muffling means" is being construed. Thus, the Examiner's interpretation of the word "baffling" is irrelevant.

Secondly, there is no legal basis for the Examiner's position that the word "baffling" is always functional. For example, the Federal Circuit has interpreted a claim phrase containing the word "baffle" when used in a claim (e.g., "second baffle means") as being structural, not functional language, see *for example*, *Envirco Corporation v. Clestra Cleanroom, Inc.*, Appeal No. 99-1111 (April 18, 2000). Thus, any interpretation must be based on the facts of each case.

In this instance, the specification provides ample factual basis of structure that describes the phrase "muffler means" in order to allow one of ordinary skill in the art to conclude that the invention had possession of the claimed subject matter at the time the application was filed.

(ii) The "Means" Clauses Are Clearly Linked To A Dryer Used To Dry A Person' Body

In order to reject the claims based on Jones (see below) the Examiner interprets the above-discussed means clauses as being a part of a dryer that is used to "dry a surface of a user's body" inside a car that is being driven through a car wash.

This strains credulity. Throughout the instant specification each of the four means clauses are described as being a part of a dryer that is used to directly dry a person's body. At no time does the specification discuss drying a person's body that is sitting inside a car, much less one that is driving through a car wash.

Further, the undersigned knows of no embodiment of the present invention that could be used as the Examiner describes.

The Examiner's interpretation of the "means" clauses is clearly inconsistent with the specification, and, therefore, impermissible.

B. The Section 102 Rejections

Claims 1-3, 5, 6, 8, 13 and 14 remain finally rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) based on Jones. Appellant disagrees.

When the four means clauses discussed above are properly interpreted as means used to dry the body of a person it can be seen that Jones is not an anticipatory reference under §102(b) (nor a suggestive reference under §103).

In more detail, claim 1, on which the remaining claims depend, includes, among other things, "a diffuser for allowing air to exit in order to dry a surface of a user's body." In contrast, Jones discloses a dryer for a motor vehicle and is

wholly unrelated to drying a surface of a user's body, as in claims 1-3, 5-6, 8 and 13-14 of the present invention.

In addition, it is respectfully submitted that one of ordinary skill in the art upon reading Jones would never think of using the dryer disclosed in Jones to dry a surface of a user's body.

Appellant also points out that Jones itself states that the "operator of the vehicle is typically inside the vehicle during the washing and drying processes" (column 4, lines 43-46). Therefore, Appellant respectfully submits that it is next to impossible for the dryer in Jones to dry the surface of a person's body when the person is inside the vehicle. Nowhere in Jones is it disclosed or even suggested that the surface of a person's body is dried.

Appellant also notes that claim 1 includes the feature of "movement means for moving the diffuser over a wide range of angles in order to dry different parts of the surface". Jones does not disclose or suggest such a movement means. In fact, Jones teaches away from the use of such a movement means. At least in column 6, lines 43-55, Jones discusses the so-called "Coanda effect." Jones notes that prior art driers included side nozzles that were oscillated "over a very wide arcuate range." Jones goes on to say that "however, the inventors herein have discovered that the oscillation of the side nozzles should be limited to much narrower arcuate range." Thus, Jones teaches away from using movement means to move a diffuser over a wide range of angles; exactly the opposite of the claimed invention.

Because Jones does not disclose each and every feature of the present invention, Jones cannot anticipate claims 1-3, 5, 6, 8, 13 and 14.

C. The Section 103 Rejections

(i) claim 4

Claim 4 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Jones in view of Aisenberg. Appellant disagrees.

Appellant respectfully submits that Aisenberg does not overcome the deficiencies in Jones as described above.

Accordingly, Appellant respectfully submits that claim 4 is patentable over Jones and Aisenberg for the reasons stated above with respect to claim 1.

Appellant also submits that the combination of Jones and Aisenberg is improper because in order to combine Jones and Aisenberg one or both of these references would have to be modified in such a way that one or both of these references' intended purposes would be rendered unsatisfactory and/or one or both of these references' principles of operation would have to change. As indicated above, Jones is aimed at a dryer for a motor vehicle while Aisenberg is aimed at a wall-mounted hand dryer. Either Jones's motor vehicle dryer would have to be modified to work as a hand dryer or Aisenberg's hand dryer would have to be modified to work as a motor vehicle dryer. In any case, such a modification would render Jones and/or Aisenberg unsatisfactory for their intended purposes or require Jones or Aisenberg's principles of operation to be modified; both are impermissible (see MPEP 2143.01).

(ii.) claims 7 and 9-10

Claims 7 and 9-10 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) based on the Jones. Appellant respectfully disagrees for at least the following reasons.

Initially, Appellant notes that claims 7 and 9-10 depend from claim 1 and are, therefore, patentable over Jones for the reasons set forth above with respect to claim 1.

Further, in the obviousness rejection of claims 7 and 9-10, the Examiner states "it would have been an obvious matter of design choice to provide any type of construction material, since the Appellant has not patently distinguished those types of claimed construction material from those found in the prior art cited in this action...". Appellant respectfully submits that the Examiner has not set forth a *prima facie* basis for obviousness.

(iii.) claim 11

Claim 11 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) based on the combination of Jones and Bahman. Appellant disagrees.

Initially, Appellant notes that claim 11 depends from claim 1 and is therefore patentable over the combination of Jones and Bahman for at least the reasons set forth above with respect to claim 1 because Bahman does nothing to overcome the deficiencies of Jones as set forth above.

In addition, Appellant notes that the combination of Jones and Bahman is improper. As indicated above, Jones is directed at a dryer for a motor vehicle while Bahman is directed at a dryer for styling hair using both hands. As such the combination of Jones and Bahman would require that the principles of operation for either Jones or Bahman or both would have to be changed. This is impermissible (see MPEP 2143.01). In addition, if one or both of the principles of operation of Jones and Bahman were modified, this would render either Jones or Bahman unsatisfactory for their intended purposes. Again, this is impermissible (see MPEP 2143.01).

Appellant notes the statement made by the Examiner that "it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art to combine" the teaching of Jones with that of Bahman. Appellant respectfully disagrees. Again, it strains credulity to believe that one of ordinary skill in the art would combine an industrial dryer used to dry automobiles with any dryer, be it Bahman or any other dryer, which is used to dry the surface of a person's body.

(iv.) claim 12

Claim 12 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) based on the combination of Jones and Chan. Appellant respectfully disagrees.

Initially, Appellant notes that claim 12 depends from claim 1 and is

,therefore, patentable over the combination of Jones and Chan for the reasons set forth above with respect to claim 1 because Chan does nothing to overcome the deficiencies in Jones as set forth above.

In addition, Appellant respectfully submits that the combination of Jones and Chan is improper. Again, Jones is directed at a dryer for a motor vehicle while Chan is directed at a conventional hand-held dryer. The combination of Jones and Chan requires that the principle of operation of either Jones or Chan or both be modified. This is impermissible (see MPEP 2143.01). In addition, if such modifications were made, they would render either Jones or Chan or both unsatisfactory for their intended purposes. Again, this is impermissible (see MPEP 2143.01).

Conclusion:

Appellant respectfully request that members of the Board reverse the decision of the Examiner and allow claims 1-14.

The Commissioner is authorized in this, concurrent, and future replies, to charge payment or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 50-3777 for any additional fees required under 37 C.F.R. § 1.16 or under 37 C.F.R. § 1.17; particularly, extension of time fees.

Respectfully submitted,

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VIII. CLAIMS APPENDIX

1. A dryer comprising:
a diffuser for allowing air to exit in order to dry a surface of a user's body;
movement means for moving the diffuser over a wide range of angles in order to dry different parts of the surface; and
control means for sending instructions to the movement means in order to control the movement of the movement means over the wide range of angles.
2. The dryer as in claim 1 further comprising securing means for securing the dryer to an object for support.
3. The dryer as in claim 1 wherein the wide range of angles comprises a range selected from the group consisting of 0 to 35 degrees, 0 to 90 degrees, 0 to 180 degrees, 0 to 360 degrees.
4. The dryer as in claim 1 wherein the control means further comprises a transceiver for detecting the presence or absence of a user.
5. The dryer as in claim 1 wherein the control means is preprogrammed to control movement of the movement means through the wide range of angles.
6. The dryer as in claim 1 wherein the control means comprises programmable control means for controlling the movement of the movement means through the wide range of angles.

7. The dryer as in claim 1 wherein the dryer is made of a lightweight material.

8. The dryer as in claim 1 further comprising muffler means for reducing noise made by the dryer.

9. The dryer as in claim 8 wherein the muffler means is made of a heat sensitive material.

10. The dryer as in claim 8 wherein the muffler means is made of a heat resistant or heat tolerant material.

11. The dryer as in claim 1 wherein the control means further comprises a removable remote control.

12. The dryer as in claim 1 further comprising a retractable power cord.

13. The dryer as in claim 1 wherein the control means further comprise a timer for determining how long the dryer has been operating.

14. The dryer as in claim 1 wherein the control means is operable to send the instructions to the movement means without the need for a user to access the control means.

APPELLANT' BRIEF ON APPEAL
U.S. Application No.: 10/733,414
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IX. EVIDENCE APPENDIX

None.

X. RELATED PROCEEDINGS APPENDIX

None.